



(Banner by Sven Kramer)

We have had a lot of new readers recently...welcome to you all! Please feel free to join in and make a contribution to the newsletter.

We are still talking about the fabulous RB Experience. I have put a few more photos in attachments, this time to show more of you and the atmosphere. Thank you to the photographers, who are credited on the attachments. Brian Barry has written about his experience of the Experience and Eddy Bonte has sent us his review of the evening from his website. Both good reading!

Dave's article, this month, is about Russ's career with Epic and the Argent albums.

Would it be possible to have a READERS' LIVES contribution from one of those many people who said they would do it but haven't yet?!! Someone? Please? We would like to get to know you better.

Sue

THIS MONTH

Russ: *"What have I been doing this month? Studio everyday....I've written a couple of new songs, so that becomes the catalyst to get me waking up in the early hours, turning on the bedside lamp and writing words, then turning the light off, being unable to sleep because I've thought of some more words, so I turn on the light and add a bit more....this can go on for an hour because by then I'm wide awake, I get dressed and either go for a run, [if it's getting light] or I'll go in and record.*

I had an invitation to Nick Newell's memorial. Nick died a year ago and was a good friend...I'd known him since 1970, although, he'd been a professional sax player since the sixties. Notably, he'd been part of Zoot Money's Big Roll Band. Zoot and his band were very popular and were one of the best soul, R and B outfits of the time and I was pleased to see, when I arrived at The Hadley Wood Golf Club, Zoot was set up and ready to play. It was a great turn out and many brilliant musicians of our past were there. I spoke to Mike Cotton, the wonderful trumpet player and leader of The Mike Cotton Sound....Nick was part of that set up when we became friends. Members of the Kinks were there. Nick and The MC Sound toured with The Kinks in the 70's. Nick and I actually became closer from 1974, when he played on my first album, then on the Roger Daltrey solo album 'Ride a Rock Horse' and Leo Sayer's album 'Another Year, ' both I produced - [Leo's, I produced with Adam Faith]. There were so many players at the Memorial and it was truly a celebration of Nick and all put together by Nick's lovely wife, Marilyn.

There are a few other developments on the touring front, although, I'll fill you in on that when I have more info...

Isn't this country amazing in the Spring....The weather's beautiful at the moment and I hope you're all enjoy it...Much Love, Russ x

THE RB EXPERIENCE

From Brian Barry

Well, when the idea of the RB Experience was first mooted I knew it was going to be a great night. But I doubt anyone who was there could have imagined it would be as memorable as it turned out to be. Certainly not me, that's for sure. Jacqui and I arrived in Ware in the early afternoon to take in a bit of the town itself. When we arrived at the hotel, the first person we met was the man responsible for all of the banners and posters we see on the Russ Ballard Facebook page and website, Sven Kramer. We hadn't met before, but we knew each other right away from the Facebook photos. That made a nice start to the day.

It was T-shirt weather, and a stroll along the canal path, a couple of drinks in one of the many lovely looking pubs and an Italian meal before the gig/party/Experience, certainly left us with a great impression of Ware. We'll definitely be back for a visit ourselves pretty soon.

We thought we'd get there dead on opening time, hopefully before things really heated up. Wow... the place was jam packed already! It didn't take long to meet up with a few different people who had only been cyber friends until now. I had met Lord Jones and his brother Roland at the Stables gig Russ did last year, so it was nice to have a chat with them. And it was a nice surprise to see Russ's son Chris there for a while before he went off to his own gig.

Poor Russ, as we know, was a bit under the weather on the night, but he spoke beautifully about everyone's favourite bass player and all round good guy, Jim Rodford. It was obviously quite emotional for Russ, because Jim should have been here tonight. It was a sad moment indeed, but happy memories of Jim will prevail.

I won't review the actual acts who did their bit over the course of the night as that has been done elsewhere. However, I have to say Chris Andrews' voice was particularly stunning. And by a wee quirk of fate, the first single that came into our house when we got one of those new-fangled radiograms was "Yesterday Man!"

The big thrill of course was to see the Roulettes reformed for the night. I doubt there could have been many of Russ's biggest fans who were here tonight, would have seen them before. Apart from the great music they made, I think it's a mark of the men themselves that their friendship is still obviously so strong 55 years later. They were all great personalities themselves, and they certainly could still rock out like some musos half their age.

The first band I ever saw live, when I was a teenager way back in 1972 was Argent. The say "Never meet your heroes", but having met Russ a few years ago, and he HAS been an all-time favourite since then, he certainly proved to be the exception to that alleged rule. He's always been very gracious with his time when

it comes to meeting fans, but tonight, for me at least, he went way above and beyond the call of duty.

He invited me up to join him for a number, and I had to think on my feet as to what we could do. Eddie Cochran flashed into my head, partly because of the Eddie T shirt Russ wore on his album sleeve “Winning”, and partly because I knew everybody on stage would know at least SOME Eddie Cochran songs.

Thankfully they did, and four of the best musical minutes of my life passed by in an instant.

That was just an incredible thing for me to have happened, but ultimately when all was said and done, the best thing was actually meeting old and making new friends on this magical night. It must have taken an awful lot of work and effort for Russ to put this together, and we’re all so grateful to him for doing it. There’s talk of maybe doing this again sometime, and hopefully it won’t be such hard work for him next time. I know we would all like to do our bit in helping the next time if we can.

Kudos of course have to go to Sue for playing her part in the organisation of this fan meet up. Some great memories for me, and a great night was had by Jacqui too. She knew how much the night meant to me, so it’s a big heart-felt “thank you” to Russ from us both. Fingers crossed there will be a next time!

From Eddy Bonte

Eddy is a newsletter reader, writer and broadcaster in Dutch and English, based in Belgium. Here is his review of the RB Exp from his website.

<http://www.keysandchords.com/live---russ-ballard-the-rb-experience---7-april-2018---the-southern-maltings-ware-uk.html>

[LIVE - RUSS](#)

[BALLARD: The RB
Experience - 7 april
2018 - The Southern
Maltings, Ware \(UK\)
\[www.keysandchords.com\]\(http://www.keysandchords.com\)](#)

"The RB Experience", zo luidt de naam van het feestje dat RB oftewel Russ Ballard voor zijn fans organiseerde. Drie uur lang trakteerde deze zanger, componist, pianist en gitarist van o.m. Argent...

Russ Ballard

YOUR QUESTIONS

I've found a reference on line to Bob saying in an interview that he played on a Ringo Starr version of Russ's song On The Rebound. I'm assuming Ringo asked Bob to do it because he'd played on the original and was focussing on singing in that instance (why else would a drummer ask another drummer to play on his album). Would it be possible to ask if Ringo recorded the song and if either of the boys ever heard it and what happened to it? Because I can find no listing for the song on any Ringo release anywhere.

Russ: "When Ringo and I discussed the recording sessions - (that were at Sweet Silence in Copenhagen) - I asked Ringo if he wanted to play drums... He said, "I don't mind I'm easy" so, I thought, to be safe, I should take Bob. We recorded five backing tracks and they sounded great. Bob played on 'Rebound' because he knew the song. Ringo, if I remember, did vocals on all the songs - Sadly, my Dad died just before the sessions in Copenhagen and I came home before the

recordings were finished, mainly because my mother was not feeling good. Ringo sang the songs really well...he phoned a few days later to ask if I knew where the multi tracks were...I said I assumed they were still at Sweet Silence. They must have been because one of the tracks, 'We've Gone As Far As We Can Go', was released on an album but finished by Joe Walsh."

RUSS'S MUSIC HISTORY

By Dave Williams

An Epic Story

I mentioned recently that **Into the Fire** would turn out to be the last release of original music from **Russ** on the Epic label, bringing to an end a 10-year association with the label and its parent CBS. This connection pre-dated **Russ's** solo career of course, as the same organisation was the home of his previous group **Argent**, with whom he recorded six albums. After **Russ's** departure, **Argent** would go on to record one more album, **Circus**, before themselves leaving to join RCA . As there would be a slightly longer than usual wait for **Russ's** follow-up to **Into the Fire**, I decided to break off from the album reviews and look at some of his other activities. So, where better to start than to wind the clock back to his days in **Argent** and his compositions on those six "epic" albums.



Actually, in terms of label, there were only five "Epic" albums because the debut eponymous **Argent** album appeared on the CBS label (CBS S 63781) in

1970. The background to the formation of the band is well documented. Rod Argent and fellow members of **The Zombies** had recorded and released their **Odessey and Oracle** album, by which time they'd already decided to break up as a band. The singles hadn't sold well and morale was low. **Rod Argent** and **Chris White**, their two main songwriters, decided they would continue to work together as writers and producers. Rod also wanted to form a new band with accomplished players, quality songwriting and an emphasis on strong vocal harmonies. With Chris choosing to focus on songwriting and production, the new band needed a bass player, and this position was filled by Rod's cousin **Jim Rodford**. Jim was playing in the **Mike Cotton Sound** at the time. Jim had reached a crossroads and felt the time was right to move on.

Early rehearsals featured a guitarist called **Rick Birkett**. Zombies' drummer **Hugh Grundy** sat in whilst a new drummer was sought. Although a competent player, Rick Birkett was not quite what they were looking for. An old school friend **Mac MacLeod** briefly stood in as the search continued. Meanwhile Jim had crossed paths with drummer, **Bob Henrit** many times whilst touring and sounded him out regarding the vacant position. On hearing that a guitarist was also needed Bob suggested they look at **Russ Ballard**, his friend and colleague in **Unit 4+2**. Rod and Chris attended one of their gigs, liked what they heard and the line-up was completed. The new 'unit' became **Argent**, appropriately named after its founder and leader.

Rehearsals commenced in late 1968, amid record company demands for another LP from **The Zombies** to capitalise on the post-split success of the single **Time of the Season**. An LP fittingly titled **R.I.P** was put together and issued under **The Zombies** name using some material from these early rehearsals. It was not successful but by this time Rod was eager to leave **The Zombies** behind to concentrate on the new band **Argent**.

The first **Argent** LP had some leanings towards **The Zombies** sound, understandable bearing in mind that Rod and Chris were the principal writers. **Russ** was asked if he had any songs he wished to put forward and three of his songs were used. **Argent** now had three individual songwriters. Rod and Chris, now choosing to present their individual work as Argent/White compositions, and Russ. **Liar** would be the first of the three to feature on this first LP. It was chosen for release as a single but despite its failure to enter the

charts, **Three Dog Night** picked up on the song, recorded their own version and took it to No7 in the US Billboard charts in the US, and No.14 in Canada. **The Meters** also covered the song and it featured on their 1975 live album. In 1972, the UK rock band **Capability Brown**, noted for their strong harmony vocal arrangements, recorded and released an excellent version on their **From Scratch** album. Stretching to over 7 minutes long, they used the opening bars of Argent/White's **Like Honey** as the intro. When the band split around three years later, a splinter group called **Krazy Kat** evolved and they kept the song in their set. A TV performance on BBC's **Old Grey Whistle Test** can be found on You Tube, though their version was not as polished as the **Capability Brown** arrangement. Many other cover versions over the years have established **Liar** as one of Russ's most successful compositions. How ironic that, given the prowess of Rod Argent as a songwriter, having achieved worldwide success with **She's Not There** and **Time of the Season** to his name, the most successful song on Argent's first album would be one of **Russ's**.

<https://youtu.be/v4VUDgPNkik>

[ARGENT 'LIAR'](https://youtu.be/v4VUDgPNkik)

[youtu.be](https://youtu.be/v4VUDgPNkik)

GERMAN TV 1972



Two other compositions from **Russ** were featured on the album. **Schoolgirl** is a boy and girl story of childhood, including the exchanging of love letters, playground games and those moments of innocent naughtiness. The chorus has the writer reflecting on those happy times with the line "I must have been a fool not to fall for you when you were a schoolgirl". **Lonely Hard Road** features **Russ** on piano, allowing Rod the opportunity to produce an impressive organ solo which, over the next two albums at least, would become a

trademark of the **Argent** sound. As for **Russ**, his contribution on guitar was of equal significance, very rhythmic in character. He also sang lead vocal on six of the ten songs.

The second album, **Ring of Hands** (Epic S EPC64190) followed in February 1971. By this time their sound was developing a style of its own, powered by **Bob Henrit**'s drums, more rock than pop. Again, Russ contributed three songs, and although the Argent/White compositions **Celebration**, **Sweet Mary**, **Rejoice** and **Pleasure** gained more attention, Russ's **Cast Your Spell Uranus**, **Chained** and **Where Are We Going Wrong** were all quality songs with a commercial rock edge. In fact, **Ring of Hands** is breathtakingly strong with Rod's original vision of quality songs, competent playing and strong vocal harmony arrangements, starting to bear fruit. Having achieved success with **Liar**, it is hardly surprising that **Three Dog Night** came back looking for more material to cover, and their choice was **Chained**, which appeared on their album **Seven Separate Fools**. Allegedly **Lee Michaels** also recorded the song, though I've not heard this version.

The follow-up to **Ring of Hands** was released in July 1972. **All Together Now** (Epic S EPC 64962) provided the band with their chart breakthrough. Not just one hit single but two. **Hold Your Head Up**, written by **Chris White**, reached No.5 in the UK and the US, whilst its follow-up, **Tragedy**, spent 7 weeks in the UK charts reaching No.34 despite having to compete with its predecessor, which was still hovering in the lower reaches of the charts. **Tragedy** was written by **Russ** and I think it's one of his best. I may be in a minority because I never hear it mentioned when people discuss his songs, but there's so much to enjoy. **Russ**'s funky rhythmic guitar riff, **Jim Rodford**'s bass seemingly providing a melody of its own, **Rob Henrit**'s drum shuffle, some aggressive organ playing from Rod and once again that attention to vocal harmonies. At one time, it used to feature in the live set, but eventually made way for newer songs.

Again, **All Together Now** leaned more heavily on songs written by **Rod Argent** and **Chris White**. **Russ** contributed two songs, the other one being **He's a Dynamo**, which is a no nonsense rocker driven by Rodford and Henrit, by now a solid and formidable rhythm section. The song also once featured in the live set, with **Russ** encouraging the audience to participate in the chorus, evidence

provided in one of the live concert compilation CD's released in later years; "If you can't sing He's a Dynamo, just sing Dynamo" as **Russ** tries in vain to engage a shy audience. Its unfortunate that there was insufficient space on the LP to include **Closer to Heaven**, written by Russ, which was used as one of the B side tracks on the EP version of **Hold Your Head Up**. It took me years to track down this song and it's a real gem, very much in the mould of **the Rolling Stones' Honky Tonk Women**.

Argent's fourth album, **In Deep** (Epic S EPC 65475) was released in March 1973. It features **Russ's** anthemic **God Gave Rock and Roll to You**, which reached No.18 in the UK charts. As with many of his songs, it was covered extensively, notably by **Kiss** but also **Petra**, **Dennis Greaves** and **The Truth** and no doubt a host of others. Russ contributed three other songs; **It's Only Money (Pt 1)** and **Its Only Money (Pt2)** and **Rosie**, which is probably best described as a party song, and one I could imagine **Rod Stewart and The Faces** having fun with on stage.

By the time the album **Nexus** (Epic S EPC 65924) arrived, it was clearer than ever that the band was pulling in two directions and it was no surprise when **Russ** announced his attention to leave the band to pursue his own solo career. Despite Rod's lengthy keyboard solos, now increasingly using synthesizers rather than organ and piano, there was still room for four of **Russ's** compositions. He continued to give his all, contributing some nice lead guitar work on **Music from the Spheres** and **The Coming of Kohoutek**. The four songs written by **Russ** were varied. **Thunder and Lightning** harked back to earlier works such as **Chained**. Even here, Rod's keyboards seem to be dominating and if there is any evidence that Russ lacked much influence over the arrangements of his songs, I suspect this would be a prime example.

Sandwiched between the lengthy progressive songs **Infinite Wanderer** and **Music from the Spheres**, Russ's **Love** is a soothing song with a nice chord structure. It features some nice vocal arrangements. The song is representative of some of the content that would appear on his first solo album a year later. Meanwhile, his **Man for all Reasons** is different again. The title is a clever twist on Robert Bolt's famous play, and the lyrics address the contrasting aspects of human character; leaders, lawbreakers, lovers, losers, loners, warmongers and peacemakers. Against a nice military drum rhythm from **Bob Henrit**, the vocals are unusual in that the main lines are sung in harmony with some solo voices

singing backing lines. A kind of back to front approach. Guitar appears to be absent until the bridge when **Russ** steps in to hammer out a few power chords. Elsewhere it sounds like he might be playing piano. Rod features on synthesizer throughout, including a nice synth solo midway through and some mellotron flute. Overall a pleasant song, which also applies to Argent and White's **Keeper of the Flame**, which I strongly suspect is probably more Chris than Rod.

The closing track of the album is **Gonna Meet My Maker**. I feel a tinge of sadness when I hear this song. It's the final recorded **Argent** song that would feature **Russ** as writer, singer and player. Judging by his performance it sounds like he meant to go out with a bang. His voice powers through the song, he lets loose with a killer guitar solo and the lyrics, whilst dealing with death and the afterlife, seem to echo **Russ** leaving the world of **Argent** and wondering what might lie on the other side. The other three members would have reason to feel the same way of course. I'm only too aware that the running order of songs is not necessarily related to the order in which they were recorded, but regardless, **Gonna Meet My Maker** seems a fitting farewell. It wasn't quite the end though. A few months later Epic would put out a live double album by **Argent** called **Encore** (Epic S EPC 88083).

Finally, **Russ**'s name appeared as a writer on other releases on the Epic label. The release that stands out is **I Don't Believe in Miracles** by **Colin Blunstone**. Whilst never releasing a studio version, there is a live rendition by **Argent** on **Encore**. A second **Colin Blunstone** single written by **Russ** called **It's Magical** followed. Again released on Epic, this one didn't make the charts. Other notable Epic releases include the singles by the **ABBA** girls; **I Know There's Something Going On** by **Frida** and **Can't Shake Loose** by **Agnetha**. Finally, one I mentioned a few weeks ago, former **Labelle** chanteuse **Nona Hendryx** released her cover version of **Winning** on the label, and that brings my Epic story to an end.

RECORDED BY OTHERS

We all know Colin Blunstone's recording of I Don't Believe in Miracles but this one, It's Magical, as mentioned in Dave's article, might not be so well known. Who is that on backing vocals?

<https://youtu.be/HTIbQlqp-2g>

[COLIN BLUNSTONE -](#)

[It's magical](#)

[youtu.be](#)

I do not own the rights to either the images or audio. Colin Blunstone as well as being lead singer of The Zombies, collaborated with a other artists and ban...















